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UNCLAS SANTIAGO 001675

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, WHA/EPSC
STATE FOR INR/IAA, PM, INL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - CAFTA

On August 7, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 116,807) ran an editorial entitled, "Free Trade in Central America." Quote:

"By a narrow two-vote margin the U.S. House of Representatives approved a free trade agreement between the United States and Central America (CAFTA)... Beyond the terms of CAFTA lie implications for the President Bush's leadership: the expansion of free trade, the eradication of poverty, and an alternative to Venezuela's demagoguery--as no country has achieved development or integration without international trade."

KELLY